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## X.—CHAUCER'S REEVE AND MILLER

My recent article, *The Secret of Chaucer's Pardoner*,<sup>1</sup> was the first of a series of studies advanced in support of the general thesis that Chaucer, in his choice of physical peculiarities that would fittingly correspond to the characters of his Canterbury Pilgrims, made use of, or at least was influenced by, the rules and regulations laid down in the universally popular Physiognomies of his time. More specifically, I attempted to show that the *Pardoner* is a typical example of what the physiognomists would call a *eunuchus ex nativitate*. The present article demonstrates that Chaucer's Reeve and Miller, in the exact correspondence of their respective personal appearances and characters, are also "scientifically" correct according to the specifications of physiognomical lore, and that the quarrel between these traditional and professional enemies cannot properly be understood unless scanned from the medieval point of view.

Though the description of the Reeve's person is meager enough, it doubtless sufficed to indicate to the well-informed men and women of the fourteenth century everything that Chaucer wanted to say in regard to the Reeve's character:

The Reve was a sclendre colerik man,  
His berd was shave as ny as ever he can,  
His heer was by his eres round y-shorn,  
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.  
Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,  
Y-lyk a staf, there was no calf y-sene.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XVIII, pp. 593 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford Chaucer*, ed. W. W. Skeat, C. T., A, 587. All other quotations from Chaucer in this paper are taken from this edition.

Now, just what did these few items of personal appearance, perhaps only amusing to modern readers, signify to the medieval mind? The Reeve's custom of shaving his beard and of wearing his hair closely cropped need not detain us; it merely indicated in Middle English times a man of low caste or, more especially, an obedient and humble servant.<sup>3</sup> This ostentatious display of humility affected by the Reeve was doubtless a part of his general programme of hoodwinking his young lord and of privately increasing the store of his own goods; he could so "plesen subtilly" that, in addition to what he stole, he had the confidence and thanks of his lord, together with gifts of coats and hoods besides. Everybody in Chaucer's time knew all about the four "complexiouns" of men, so that the artist thought it necessary to suggest only two characteristics of the "colerik" man in his description of the Reeve. The Middle English *Secreta Secretorum*, some version of which Chaucer certainly knew, has this to say: "The colerike (man) by kynde he sholde be lene of body, his body is lyght and drye, and he shal be Sumwhat rogh; and lyght to wrethe and lyght to Peyse; of sharpe witt, wyse and of good memorie, a greete entremyttere . . . ; he loughy hasty wengeaunce; Desyrous of company of women moore than hym nedyth."<sup>4</sup> A large part of the delineation of the Reeve's character, in the General Prologue; is taken up with illustrative material bearing

<sup>3</sup> For a full discussion of the significance of this custom, *vide* W. C. Curry, *The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty*, pp. 36, 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Secreta Secretorum*, ed. Robert Steele, EETS, E. S. LXXIV, p. 220. With this should be compared another translation by Lydgate and Burgh, *Secrees of Old Philisoffres*, ed. R. Steele, EETS, E. S. LXVI, p. 104. Chaucer alludes to "the secree of secrees" (*C. T.*, G, 1447) and, as I shall show, is familiar with the material contained in the physiognomical part of it at least, Steele and Lounsbury to the contrary.

out the fact that he is of "a sharpe witt, wyse and of good memorie." He understands the art of husbandry; the raising of cattle, chickens, poultry, and swine is a congenial and profitable occupation; and, it is said, he could so tamper with the annual reports made to his lord that, in spite of his rascality, no man might bring him in arrears. Many of the under-servants knew that he was a thief, of course, but he was so "hasty" of his "wengeaunce" that they were discreetly silent:

They were adrad of him as of the deeth (A, 595).

The Reeve was a "colerik" man, and therefore a cunning, crafty rascal. So Chaucer presents him in the General Prologue.

When we come to the Reeve's Prologue, however, Oswald the Carpenter seems to be quite another man; at any rate the emphasis is there placed on other, different elements of his character. Without further preparation, apparently, than the suggestion in the General Prologue that "*in his youth*" he learned a good trade, we suddenly find that he is an old man, easily angered and as easily appeased, indulging in certain preachments on old age and the follies of youth to the disgust of the Host (A, 3865). He is here revealed in his true colors: he is a lecher of the worst type, a churl, a pitiful example of the burnt-out body in which there still lives the concupiscent mind. Youth is past; his hairs are white with age, or perhaps from illicit association with women<sup>5</sup>; he is like rotten fruit. Yet he still has a "coltes tooth," and though the power to gratify his physical desires is gone, he still hops to folly while the world pipes. And, worst of all, he shamelessly boasts of it:

<sup>5</sup> Richard Saunders, *Physiognomie and Chiromancie*, London, 1671, p. 189.

For in oure wil there stiketh ever a nayl,  
 To have an hoor heed and grene tayl,  
 As hath a leek (*C. T.*, A, 3878 ff.).

This unexpected change in the character of the Reeve has, until recently, seemed to me a serious blemish upon the artistic workmanship of Chaucer; Oswald, an aged reprobate reveling in the memories of the follies committed in his youth and prime, seems to come into direct conflict with the delightfully cunning and wide-awake Reeve of the General Prologue. But Chaucer is always the conscious artist. Rightly understood, he never leaves out anything that might be considered essential to the unity and consistency of his characterizations. In the General Prologue—just where it should be!—there is the emphatic statement that the Reeve has exceedingly small legs—and there is a reason why.

I must call attention to the fact that whenever Chaucer takes the trouble to impress upon the reader's notice special physical peculiarities of his Pilgrims, we may rest assured that he means for them to be straightway interpreted in terms of character. What, then, should the Reeve's small legs signify? The physiognomists do not leave us in doubt. Aristotle himself affirms<sup>6</sup> that "quicunque crura subtilia nervosa habent, luxuriosi, referuntur ad aves." Polemon, the greatest and probably the father of most of the medieval physiognomists, is still more explicit in his discussion, "De signis crurum":<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle's *Physiognomonika*, Bartholomaei de Messana interpretatio Latina, ed. R. Foerster in *Scriptores Physiognomonici*, I, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> Polemonis de physiognomonia liber Arabice et Latine, ed. Georgius Hoffman, in *Scrip. Physiog.*, Foerster, p. 204. This is Antonius Polemo Laodicensis, the celebrated rhetorician and historian who flourished under Trajan and Hadrian and who died about 144 A. D. Cf. Foerster, *op. cit.*, I, pp. lxxiv ff. His *Physiognomon* is also edited by I. G. F. Franzius in *Scriptores physiognomoniae veteres*, 1780, pp. 209 ff.

"Ac si praeterea nervi eorum adparet, omne de iis iudicium ad multum cupidinem et scorationem refertur." An anonymous author of the eleventh century—and a follower of Polemon—is of a like opinion:<sup>8</sup> "Libidinosi et intemperantes libidinum ita sunt; color albus . . . crura tenuia nervis intenta atque hispida"; and the *Secreta Secretorum* says that "tho men whyche haue smale legges and synnowy bene luchrus" (p. 226). When we remember, moreover, that one of the chief characteristics of the "colerik" man is that he is "Desyrous of the company of women moore than hym nedyth," it is apparent that Chaucer has made in the General Prologue ample preparation for the revelations which come in the Reeve's Prologue. His personal appearance betrays the Reeve to any ordinary observer—with the medieval point of view—and his later confession need cause no surprise.

The Miller, indeed, takes his measure immediately. As Professor F. Tupper has already shown, the Miller and the Reeve are traditional and professional enemies;<sup>9</sup> it is even possible that they may have met before. At any rate, when the drunken Miller rises to a point of personal privilege and demands that he be permitted to "quyte the Knightes tale" with a story of a cuckold carpenter and a faithless wife, the Reeve—who is also a "wel good wrighte" (A, 614)—recognizes that he is about to be attacked and voices a protest:

stint thy clappe,  
Lat be thy dronken harlotrye.  
It is a sinne and eek a greet folye

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<sup>8</sup> Anonymi de physiognomonia liber Latinus, *Scrip. Physiog.*, Foerster, II, p. 133. The editor collates fifteen codices of this version. Cf. I, pp. cxlvi.

<sup>9</sup> *The Quarrels of the Canterbury Pilgrims*, Jour. Eng. and Germ. Philol., XIV, pp. 265.

To apeiren any man, or him diffame,  
And eek to bringen wyves in swich fame (*C. T.*, A, 3145).

The battle is on! The Miller's Tale is not so much an attack upon carpenters as a class as it is a direct thrust at this particular Reeve. And the ribald Miller has already divined the weak spot in the *amour propre* of his ancient enemy; namely, his old age. Professor Tupper says: "The obvious parallel between the Reeve and the victim of the Miller's Tale lies not in their common trade . . . but in their like cuckoldry, the traditional fate of eld mated with youth. The story . . . is eminently successful as a fabliau of the futile jealousy of age."<sup>10</sup> In other words, the Miller in his description of the carpenter of the Tale is drawing material from his personal observations of the Reeve. In like manner, as we shall see later, the Reeve retaliates by attributing to the miller of *his* story personal characteristics which his enemy possessed, but which Chaucer failed to put into the picture of his Miller drawn in the General Prologue. Neither the Reeve nor the Miller, therefore, is complete without reference to his prototype. Since the whole of the Miller's Tale is a shaft aimed at the old age of the Reeve, we are prepared, as we should not otherwise have been, for the sermon which the latter preaches in the Prologue to the Reeve's Tale. He is there angered that his feeble condition should have been held up to the ridicule of the company in such a manner; perhaps he is indeed a cuckold. At least he feels that he must defend himself, and in doing so he is betrayed into revealing his life of harlotry and into boasting that, though his hair is gray, he is still not so impotent and so worn out in doing "Venus workes" as he may seem. He still has a "grene tayl"; his "coltes

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

tooth" is yet to be shed (*C. T.*, A, 3865 ff.). He is guilty of three, at least, of the four Sins which he says "longen un-to elde": boasting, covetousness, and anger.

The mildness of his anger, however, is somewhat surprising when we remember that the under-servants at home are as afraid of him as of the pestilence. Chaucer says that most of the company laughed at the Miller's story, and that no man found it unbearably obscene except Oswald:

A litel ire is in his herte y-laft,  
He gan to grucche and blamed it a lyte (A, 3862 f.).

As a matter of fact, Oswald is what the physiognomists list as a timid man. Aristotle writes: "Signa timidi; pili molles . . . extrema corporis inbecillia et crura parva, manus longae et subtiles, lumbi autem parvi et inbecilles,"<sup>11</sup> and further affirms: "Signa pusillanimi; parvorum membrorum et parvorum articulorum, macer et parvorum oculorum."<sup>12</sup> The anonymous author mentioned above also gives as one of the signs of a timid man, "cruribus tenuibus,"<sup>13</sup> while the *Secreta Secretorum* merely declares that "longe leggis" indicate a man of "ille Complexioun" (p. 233). While the Reeve may rule with a tyrannical hand the underlings at home, he is, as his small legs indicate, a coward at heart; he is especially afraid of the blustering, bragging Miller, who rides with his bagpipe at the head of the "route" (A, 566). Consequently he withdraws himself from the other Pilgrims and, as Chaucer says,

And ever he rood the hinderest of our route (A, 622).

Forced to come into the very presence of his burly enemy,

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, *Scrip. Physiog.*, Foerster, I, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, Foerster, II, p. 120.



however, the Reeve discreetly represses his anger; he has a "litel ire" in his heart and blames the Miller's Tale only a "lyte." He could, if he wanted to speak of ribaldry, tell a story about a certain miller—but he is too old; "me list not pley for age" (A, 3865). And partly because his pride has been hurt, as we have seen already, but mostly because he is afraid of the Miller, Oswald launches forth into a sermon on old age in general and on his own sad case in particular. Under the circumstances, it is a neat and effective subterfuge. But upon being rallied by the Host, he allows his indignation to get the better part of prudence; he decides that, after all, he *will* tell "right in his cherles termes" a story about a proud miller called "deynous Simkin."

Nothing could be more natural than that the Reeve, who has just expressed the fervent wish that the Miller's neck might be broken (A, 3918), should give in the description of the unfortunate hero of his Tale items of character and personal appearance taken directly from the man who stands before him. Just as the Carpenter of the Miller's Tale is none other than the Reeve himself, so far as age and cuckoldry are concerned, so the character and person of Simkin, in the first eighteen lines of the Reeve's Tale, are in reality those of the Miller. Both, it will be observed, are excellent wrestlers, proud boasters and swaggerers, and consummate harlots; both reap a rich harvest from the practice of bold theft. The Miller, therefore, as we shall discuss him, is a composite of Simkin and of Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrim. Of him, as of Simkin, may be said:

Round was his face, and camuse was his nose.  
As piled as an ape was his skulle (A, 3935 f.).

And only when we consider these lines in connection with

the description in the General Prologue can we gain an accurate and full picture of the Miller:

The Miller was a stout carl, for the nones,  
 Ful big he was of braun and eek of bones; . . .  
 He was short-sholdered, brood, a thikke knarre,  
 Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre  
 Or breke it, at a renning, with his heed.  
 His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,  
 And ther-to brood, as though it were a spade.  
 Up-on the cop right of his nose he hade  
 A werte, and ther-on stood a tuft of heres,  
 Reed as the bristles of a sowes eres;  
 His nose-thirles blake were and wyde . . .  
 His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys (A, 545 ff.).

To all of which must be added the fact that, in his duet with the Pardoner, he displays a deep bass voice (A, 672), which is otherwise called a "Pilates vois" (A, 3124).

In the above description I take "short-sholdered" to mean not only, as Professor Skeat suggests, "short in the forearms" (Cf. Glossary); it evidently has reference to the fact that the Miller's broad, knotty shoulders are square and high-upreared so that, his short bull-like neck scarcely appearing at all, the head seems to rest upon them. Of such a stocky figure, Aristotle says:<sup>14</sup> "Inverecundi signa; . . . masculi scapularum sursum elevati, figura non recta, sed parum curva, in motibus acutus, rubeus corpore, color sanguineus, facies rotunda, pectus sursum tractum." Rasis, whom Chaucer certainly knew, also remarks:<sup>15</sup> "Inverecundus est . . . cuius praeterea

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*, in *Scrip. Physiog.*, Foerster, I, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> Rasis physiognomonie versio Latina a Gerardo Cremonensi facta, ed. in *Scrip. Physiog.*, Foerster, II, p. 176. This is the second Book of the *De Re Medicina* translated from the original Arabic of Abubecri Rasis (Mohammed Abou-Bekr Ibn-Zacaria), an eminent physician of the tenth century, born at Rey (Ragés), and died 923. Cf. *Biographie Universelle*, Michaud; T. Warton, *History of English Poetry*, 1774, p. 441; T. R. Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer*, II, p. 394.

spatulae elevatae sunt, motus festinus, color vero rufus, multum habens sanguinem, facies rotunda, thorax parumper gibbosus . . . est etiam multum loquax." Not only is a man of the Miller's build shameless, immodest, and loquacious, according to the physiognomies as in Chaucer, but he is apparently bold and easily angered. Says Aristotle:<sup>16</sup> "Signa iracunda; . . . figura bene latus, animosus, subrufus, spatulae distantes et magnae et latae, extrema magna et fortia"; to which Rasis adds:<sup>17</sup> "Audax est, cuius capilli sunt fortes et asperi et statura ipsius erecta est, ossa quoque fortia et extrema atque costae . . . pectus praeterea magnum et venter magnus ac spatulae magnae, collum quoque forte et crassum . . . ipse quoque est valde iracundus et semper iram conservens." Our anonymous author would say that the Miller might be "referred to the bull": "Bos animal est habens caput grande . . . os latum, nares latas, latera grandia . . . ad huius animalis speciem homines qui referuntur, erunt indociles, consilii egentes, loquendi et agendi ignavi . . . regi magis quam regere apti."<sup>18</sup> Already it appears from these passages that a man of the Miller's figure and with his round face, sanguine complexion, and red, bristly beard, his short neck, great mouth, and broad nostrils may be pronounced upon sight a man easily angered, shameless, loquacious, and apt to stir up strife. So Chaucer presents his Miller:

Chaucer alludes to Rasis in the General Prologue (A, 432), placing him among the celebrated physicians whom the Doctour of Physik knew well.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, in *Scrip. Physiog.*, Foerster, I, p. 35. Cf. also the *Secreta Secretorum*, p. 224.

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, in *Scrip. Physiog.*, Foerster, II, p. 173 f.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Foerster, II, p. 138. A like opinion may be found in *Physiognomica & Chiromantica specialia*, à Rodolpho Goelenio, Marpurgi Cattorum, 1621, p. 29.

He was a janglere and a goliardeys,  
And that was most of sinne and harlotryes (A, 560 f.).

We have already seen how, in his drunkenness, he thrusts himself forward immediately after the Knight to tell his Tale, and how he picks a quarrel with the Reeve.

But it is only by the study of these physical traits in detail that we are able to get the full significance of them in terms of character. Of short arms, such as the Miller has, the pseudo-Aristotelean *Secreti Secretorum* says:<sup>19</sup> "si brachia brevia sunt, possessor eorum amicus mali (rixarum?), pusillanimus est"; this opinion is supported by a quotation presented by Foerster: "brevitas brachi et lacerti malam comprehensionem et malitiam morum significat."<sup>20</sup> Nor does the M. E. *Sec. Sec.* dissent: "Whan the shuldres bene moche vprerid, thei tokenyth orribill kynde and vntrouthe; . . . and whan the armes bene ful shorte thay tokenyth lowe of dyscorde" (p. 235). Nor must the short neck be left out of consideration in connection with the item "short-sholdered." Rasis is brief and to the point:<sup>21</sup> "qui crassum habet collum durum ac forte, iracundus est et festinus"; to which may be added from the *Secreti Secretorum* (ms. Ph.):<sup>22</sup> "qui vero habet collum breve valde, est callidus defraudator, astutus, et dolosus (or, from ms. S.) vorax est (or, from ms. s.) deceptor est." The ME. *Sec. Sec.* also has it that "who-so hath a neke ful grete, he is a fole and a gloton" (p. 235),

<sup>19</sup> *Physiognomoniae secreti secretorum pseudaristotelici versiones Latinae*, ed. Foerster, *Scrip. Physiog.*, II, p. 214. These versions, or others based on them, are probably the sources of the Middle English *Secreta Secretorum*, the *Secrees of Old Philisoffres*, and much of the material of which Chaucer shows a knowledge.

<sup>20</sup> *Scrip. Physiog.*, I, p. xxxii. Cf. also the ME. *Sec. Sec.*, p. 227.

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, in *Scrip. Physiog.*, Foerster, II, p. 170.

<sup>22</sup> *Loc. cit.*, II, p. 211.

or still better that "An ouer shorte neke tokenyth a gyloure and a decyuoire" (p. 227).

This most unfortunate Miller has, moreover, a round face (probably fleshy, with puffed-out cheeks) covered with a red, bushy beard. Of such a face Aristotle says:<sup>23</sup> "Quicunque faciem carnosam habent, rathimi sunt, id est facile concupiscibiles"; Polemon affirms:<sup>24</sup> "Genarum caro si multa est, ebrietatem et ignaviam indicat"; the author of the *Secreti Secretorum* continues (ms. S):<sup>25</sup> "Carnosus in facie est impudens, ignarus, mendax (or, from ms. Ph.) est minus sapiens, importunus, (or from ms. s) grossae naturae est"; and the ME. *Sec. Sec.* has it that "who-so hath a face ouer fleshy and ouer grete, he is vnvyse, enuyous, a lyar" (p. 234), or still better, "Tho that haue grete visachys and fleschy bene dysposyd to concupyscence of fleschy lustes" (p. 228). This estimate of the Miller's character is borne out by the physiognomical significance of his red beard. As the ME. *Sec. Sec.* remarks, "Tho that bene rede men, bene Parceuyng and trechrus, and full of queyntise, i-liknyd to Foxis" (p. 229), which offers some explanation to Chaucer's description, "His berd as any sowe or fox was reed." As far back as the time of the *Proverbs of Alfred* this distrust of the red man, i. e., *rufus*, *subrufus*, is felt and expressed:<sup>26</sup>

þe rede mon he is quede  
for he wole þe þin iwil rede,  
he is a cocher, þef and horeling,  
Scolde, of wrechedome is king (702 ff.).

The form of the Miller's beard, "brood as though it were a spade," is also of considerable significance. Foerster

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, in *Scrip. Physiog.*, Foerster, I, p. 67.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 232.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 206.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. my dissertation, *ME. Ideal of Personal Beauty*, pp. 19 ff.

quotes: <sup>27</sup> "barta lata formae quadratae indivisa ingenium et usui hominibus esse significat."

Professor Skeat's definition of "piled," in the description of the Miller's skull, "deprived of hair, very thin" (Cf. Gloss.), is entirely incorrect.<sup>28</sup> Rather Chaucer means to say that the hair of the Miller's head is thick (probably bristly) and especially that it comes far down over his wide, "villainous low" forehead. (Cf. the picture of the Miller from the Ellesmere ms.). It is just such a head and forehead as Giraldus Cambrensis attributes to the wicked Geoffrey, Archbishop of York: "Capite grosso. et tanquam simiam simulans usque ad cilia fere fronte pilosa."<sup>29</sup> This quotation explains quite clearly, it seems to me, the meaning of Chaucer's "piled as an ape." The anonymous author on physiognomy informs us that one of the characteristics of the "Homo animosus" is "ultima linea capillorum capitis deorsum demissa,"<sup>30</sup> and continues: "capilli densi imminentes fronti nimium ferum animum declarant."<sup>31</sup> What he is trying to say, I think, is better expressed by a later writer, Richard Saunders—of whom more anon—in his discussion of the man with a depressed and low forehead: "For a man that is so," says he, "hath a low and abject soul, is fearful, surville . . . cowardly, and carryed away with many words of a great talker, for there is not much assurance in his words, yet he is overcome by the speech of the most simple man that

<sup>27</sup> Foerster, *op. cit.*, I, p. xxxi.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *New Eng. Dict.*: piled, "covered with pile, hair, or fur." Lydgate's *De Guil.*, 1426, is quoted, "Off look and cher ryht monstrous, Piled and seynt as any katt, And moosy-heryd as a raat."

<sup>29</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *Opera*, Rolls Series, No. 21, ed. J. S. Brewer, IV, p. 240.

<sup>30</sup> *Op. cit.*, in *Scrip. Physiog.*, Foerster, II, p. 132.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

he stands in fear of.”<sup>32</sup> From these indications we learn that, in spite of his enormous physical strength, his jangling and babbling, and for all his boasting, the Miller is still a bully, a coward at heart. For, it must be observed, when his blustering demand to be heard in the rôle of story-teller calls forth a display of considerable animus on the part of the Host (A, 3135), he is quick to acknowledge, with a show of weakening courage, that he is drunk (A, 3138); and when so slender a man as the Reeve protests against his telling a tale against a carpenter and a faithless wife, he hastens to mollify the irate little man with gentle assurances of his absolute faith in—or perhaps indifference to—the chastity of married women (A, 3151 ff.). He would not for the world cast reflections either upon the Reeve or upon any woman; why should “leve brother Oswald” be angry with him (A, 3157)! His braggardism receives a sharp and effective check. With respect to his strength, the Miller may indeed be “referred” to the bull; but with respect to his low forehead, he must be referred to the ape. And, as the anonymous author has it: “Simia est animal malignum, ridiculum, turpe”;<sup>33</sup> to which Goclenio might add: “simiae scurrilitas & dissimulatio.”<sup>34</sup>

That a mouth as large as a “great forneys” is sufficient to brand the Miller as a glutton, a swaggerer, a sensualist, and an impious fornicator who might be expected to swear by God’s “armes and by blood and bones” (A, 3125), is attested by the best physiognomists. Rasis says:<sup>35</sup> “Qui magnum habet os, gulosus est et audax”; the *Secreti Secretorum*<sup>36</sup> is again in accord: (ms. Ph.) “Qui habet os

<sup>32</sup> *Op. cit.*, *supra*, p. 182.

<sup>33</sup> *Op. cit.*, in Foerster, II, p. 139.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>35</sup> *Op. cit.*, in Foerster, II, p. 168.

<sup>36</sup> *Op. cit.*, in Foerster, II, p. 205.

latum, est bellicosus et audax, (or, from ms. S) animosus"; and both are probably thinking of a passage from Polemon:<sup>37</sup> "Latitude oris et labii crassities ventris cupidem et voracitatem significat, cum simul iniuriosus et valde impius sit . . . Nec magis os cavum quod tanquam in profundo est laudo. Est enim pravum et invidiae caedis amoris et libidinis coeundi index." Saunders, as usual, states the matter in clear and picturesque English: "He that hath a greet and broad mouth is shameless, a great babler and lyar, a carrier of false tales, very foolish, impudent, courageous, but perfidious withal . . . *Indagine* and *Corvus* say, they were never deceived by this sign."<sup>38</sup> Nor does this sign fail in the case of the Miller. His "Pilates vois" is, moreover, still another indication of an evil and malignant nature. According to Aristotle:<sup>39</sup> "Qui magna vociferantur graviter, iniuriosi (sunt)"; or as Rasis has it:<sup>40</sup> "qui vocem habet gravem, sui ventris serviens est"; or in the words of the *Secreti Secretorum*.<sup>41</sup> "si vero vox sua fuerit grossa, erit iracundus et praecipitans, malae naturae"; with all of which may be compared the ME. *Sec. Sec.*: "Tho that haue a grete voice and orible and not ful hey, done gladly wronges" (p. 231), and the further statement that "if his voys be right greet, he is Irous (hasty), and of euyl nature" (p. 166). The Miller's deep, rumbling voice must be carefully distinguished from the loud, sonorous voice such as has Emetrius, King of Inde:

His voys was as a trompe thunderinge (A, 2174).

<sup>37</sup> *Op. cit.*, in Foerster, II, pp. 226 f.

<sup>38</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>39</sup> *Op. cit.*, in Foerster, I, p. 85.

<sup>40</sup> *Op. cit.*, in Foerster, II, p. 169.

<sup>41</sup> *Loc. cit.*, in Foerster, II, p. 209. Cf. also I, p. 103, II, p. 266, and *Sec. Old Philis.*, note to l. 2647.



For as Polemon tells us:<sup>42</sup> "Cum vocem cavam gravam sonoram audis, ei strenuitatem attribue magnam audaciam, sinceritatem et veritatem." Chaucer knows his physiognomy.

Chaucer is quite aware of the fact that, of all the parts of the body, the nose is a most infallible indicator of character. He is careful, therefore, to tell us that the Miller's nose is "camuse," i. e., flat, low and concave, a pug-nose, with wide distended nostrils, and with an unsightly wart on the top, in which there is a tuft of red hairs. As to the significance to be attached to such a nose, Polemon affirms:<sup>43</sup> "Nasus . . . simus scorationem et rei venereas amorem prodit"; nor is the *Secreti Secretorum* less explicit:<sup>44</sup> "cuius nasus simus est, libidinosus et amans coitus est." All of the physiognomists agree that wide-open nostrils indicate a man easily angered, "For whan a man angryth, his noose thurles oppenyth" (*Sec. Sec.*, pp. 228, 234), to which may be added, "who-so hath a lei and Plate noose amynd, stoupyng towarde the butte, he is a iongoloure and a lyar" (*ibid.*, p. 234). And as Rasis will have it:<sup>45</sup> "cuius nares latae sunt, luxuriosus est."

Any discussion of the Miller's wart must necessarily lead us into a consideration of that division of physiognomy known generally to the Middle Ages as metoposcopy, which, in addition to treating of the significance of the lines corresponding to the celestial bodies on the forehead,

<sup>42</sup> *Op. cit.*, in Foerster, I, p. 266.

<sup>43</sup> *Op. cit.*, in Foerster, I, p. 228.

<sup>44</sup> *Loc. cit.*, in Foerster, II, p. 203. Cf. also II, pp. 204, 167, 152; Goclenio, *Op. cit.*, p. 58; *Sec. Philis.*, "Cammyd nose . . . With gristel of nose litel redily, Is sone wroth, hoot and hasty," ll. 2623 ff.; *ME. Sec. Sec.*, "Tho that haue grete noosys lyghtely bene talintid to couetise, and bene desposyd to concupiscence," p. 228.

<sup>45</sup> *Op. cit.*, in Foerster, II, p. 167.

deals with warts, moles, and other natural marks found on the face. It is based, as are the kindred sciences of geomancy and chiromancy, together with the science of dreams and medicine, on astrology. That Chaucer's knowledge of medicine, in its more technical as well as in its astrological aspects, was wider and more accurate than Professor Lounsbury<sup>46</sup> and others once supposed, has recently been demonstrated by Professors J. L. Lowes and O. F. Emerson.<sup>47</sup> And that he was also well acquainted with the "symmetrical proportions and signal moles of the body," is revealed in his description of the Miller's wart. From the time of Ptolemy on down to the age of Chaucer, I understand, astrologers were accustomed to "attribute" to the various planets sundry corresponding parts of the body: to the Sun, for example, the nerves, the sinews, and the brain; to Jupiter, the hands, the liver, and the blood; and, what concerns us especially at this point, to Venus, the nose, the mouth, and the corresponding instruments of generation.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, I have not been able to secure medieval medico-astrological books by such authorities as Haly Abenragel, an Arabian physician of the eleventh century, Visconti, and the "Brittish Merlin"; but I have had access to a later work by M. H. Cardan,<sup>49</sup> who appends to his treatise the original discussion of moles by Melampus the Grecian (with a French translation), and especially to a complete epitome of astrological science by Mr. Richard Saunders.<sup>50</sup> Now this

<sup>46</sup> T. R. Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer*, II, p. 394.

<sup>47</sup> J. L. Lowes, *Chaucer's "loveres maladye of Heroes," Modern Philology*, XI, p. 391 ff.; O. F. Emerson, *Chaucer's "Opie of Thebes Fyn," ibid.*, XVII, p. 287.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 305. <sup>49</sup> *La Metoposcopia*, Paris, 1658.

<sup>50</sup> The full title of his work is *Physiognomie, and Chiromancie, Metoposcopia, Dreams, and The Art of Memory*, London, 2nd ed., 1671.

Saunders, who has apparently familiarized himself with the works of all the above-mentioned ancient writers, is the authority *par excellence* on all things physiognomical, chiromantical, metoposcopical, a self-styled "student of astrology and physic," *semetipsissimum*. He complains of his sources that they were so "depraved with manual Errors, that no light of truth could I derive from these Fountains; but whatsoever shews of truth did therein appear, I have found them rather mistaken fallacies than real verities" (p. 296). But after sifting all the material at his disposal and comparing it with his own personal observations, he at last arrives at the truth of the whole matter.

We are, therefore, interested to hear what Saunders has to say about warts on the nose. He says (p. 287):

Now let us treat of the Nose, which, as before I observed, relates to the Genitals or Secrets. When a Mole is on the root of the Forehead, in the hollow between the Nose and the Forehead, there is another on the Foreskin of the flesh: but Haly saith, a Mole on the Forehead another on the stones; but he explains not in what part of the Forehead, when as he means the lower part of the Forehead, next the beginning of the Nose. Haly again saith, He which hath a Mole or mark on the Nostril, hath another on the privy parts on the circumference of the genitals, and another on the ribs and that side of the breast; but by the nostrils here should be understood the top of the nose; but I attribute this mistake to his interpreter, who might easily mistake the *Arabick*, and render *Naris* for *Nasus*. Melampus renders his judgment, that if a Mole appear on the Nose or near the eye, that person is beyond measure Venereal . . . : a Mole on the Nostrils gives another on the Stones, between which and the nostrils there is great sympathy.

We are especially pleased to get these opinions of Haly, because Chaucer mentions him in the list of celebrated physicians in the General Prologue (A, 431) and must have known the contents of his work *De Iudiciis*, or per-

haps his commentary on Galen.<sup>51</sup> It is also comforting to note the trifling nature of the "manual Errors" of which Haly stands convicted, because we may now accept Saunders as a more or less accurate authority on the science as it must have been understood in Chaucer's time. He is correct, moreover, in his quotation of Melampus, who says:<sup>52</sup> "S'il (le seing) est au Nez de l'homme, & que sa couleur soit blonde, il sera insatiable en amour; Et mesmes il a vn Seing en vn lieu caché." And this reminds us of the fact that Chaucer knows what he is about when he makes the Wife of Bath own to having somewhere about her person "the prente of sēynt Venus seel" (D, 604) and, on account of having been born when Taurus was in the ascendent with Mars in his first house, lament:

Yet have I Martes mark up-on my face,  
And also in another privee place (D, 619).<sup>53</sup>

But to return to the Miller's wart. The exact location of it is of the utmost importance. Chaucer says: "Up-on the cop right of his nose he hade a werte," which may be interpreted in either one of two ways: It is right on top, i. e., directly or exactly on top (or, for aught I know, on the very point), or on the top of the nose a little to the right side. I am inclined to think that Chaucer had the latter meaning in mind when he wrote the passage. But in either case the significance of it is not flattering to the Miller. Says Cardan: "Si le seing est posé sur le mileu

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 287; T. Warton, *op. cit.*, I, p. 440; Lounsbury, *op. cit.*, II, p. 393.

<sup>52</sup> Translated in Cardan, *op. cit.*, p. 223. Melampus flourished in the time of Julius Cæsar; *vide* Preface to Cardan.

<sup>53</sup> In my next article, by the way, I shall have the pleasure of casting the horoscope of the Wife of Bath and of showing the nature of this "Martes mark," together with its location and significance.

du nez, il signifie que l'homme à cause des femmes, & la femme à cause des hommes, seront sujets aux homicides, & addonnez à vne honteuse paillardise." <sup>54</sup> Saunders is still more explicit: "A mole in a man or woman appearing under the very fore point of the Nose toward the middle . . . describes another on the fore part of the Privy member, and denotes the man to be inclined to filthy infamous luxury, and subject to a violent gout, or worse, which he gets by women's company; . . . if it appear red, he is principally pained in the extreme parts of his body, as Hands, Arms, Legs, and Feet . . . ; if it appear as a Lentil, he is in most danger of the secret Privy parts; let him take heed therof." <sup>55</sup> If the mark is on the top of the nose, a little to the right, Cardan says: "Tout-fois, si le seing est placé au milieu du costé droit du nez, il produira des debats & des miseres à l'vn & à l'autre sexe." <sup>56</sup> Saunders again assents, adding further complications: "A man or woman having a Mole on top of the bridge of the Nose, inclining to the right side a little . . . indicates another on the top of the Yard or privy member, and discovers the man to be an enemy to his own peace, to sow discord between himself and his wife: . . . if it appear of honey colour, contentious brawlings shall most perplex him: if red, he is most afflicted with envious hostility; if it is like a wart or Lentil, he is a principal Artificer in his calling." <sup>57</sup> And finally, as to the red tuft of hairs that stands out from the Miller's wart, Saunders would probably say, "He that hath the nose hairy at the point, or above, is a person altogether simple hearted." <sup>58</sup>

From the material presented in this paper we may deduce the obvious conclusion, I think, that in the draw-

<sup>54</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>55</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 334.

<sup>56</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>57</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 335.

<sup>58</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 195.

ing of the Reeve and Miller Chaucer makes ample use of the rules of physiognomy. The character of the Reeve is thereby made a consistent and unified whole, and the Miller's dissolute and abandoned character is to be realized in full only by reference to the physiognomical significance of his physical peculiarities. Chaucer expresses, indeed, some compunction of conscience at being compelled to present so much of the Miller's character as he does (A, 3170); but he is not backward in heaping up bodily signs that to the initiated speak louder than words. And it has been demonstrated, with reasonable certainty, I think, that Chaucer was more or less accurately acquainted with the contents of the pseudo-Aristotelean *Secreti Secretorum*—or some work based upon it—and that he probably knew—whether directly or indirectly, I cannot say—the medico-astrological lore contained in the works of Rasis and Haly.

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